

Welcome

Public Scoping Open House

Water Users' Commitment to Provide 10,825 acre-feet to the 15-Mile Reach of the Upper Colorado River



Razorback Sucker



Colorado Pikeminnow



Bonytail Chub



Roundtail Chub

Illustration: CDOW

Environmental Assessment

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

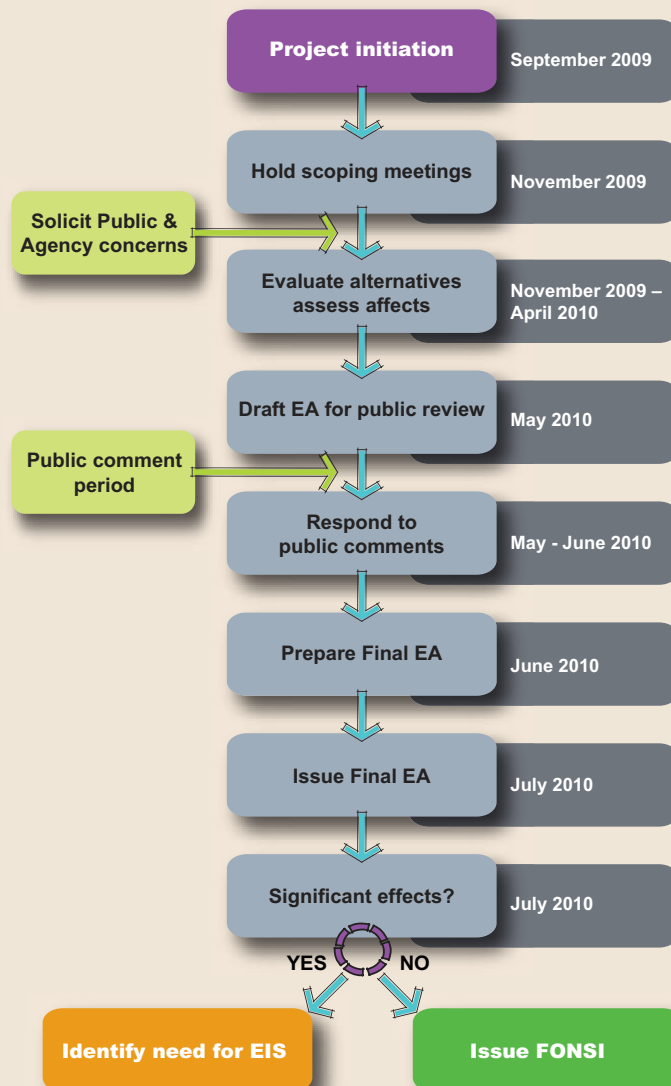
What NEPA does:

- Requires full disclosure about major actions taken by federal agencies and accompanying alternatives, impacts, and possible mitigation
- Requires that environmental concerns and impacts be evaluated during planning and decision making

What NEPA does NOT do:

- Decide which alternative to choose
- Prevent environmental impacts from occurring
- Prohibit any actions
- Justify a predetermined action

10825 Environmental Assessment Process

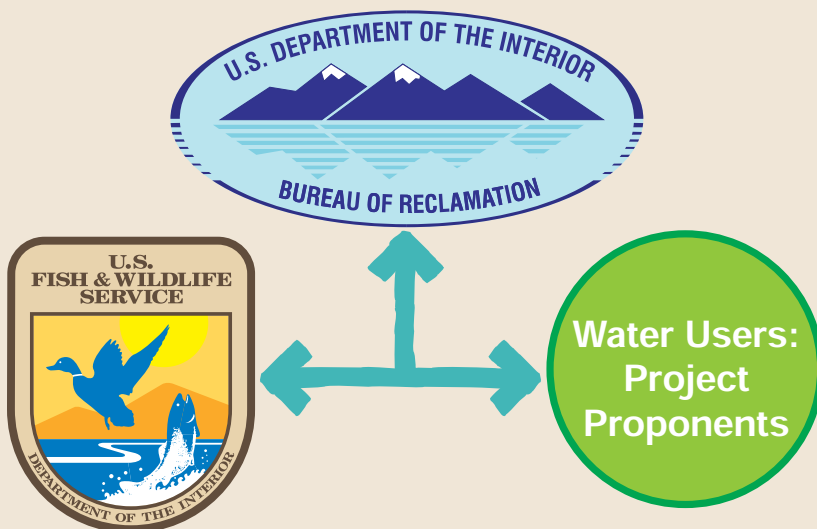


Participants

The Bureau of Reclamation (**Reclamation**) is the **lead federal agency**. The Water Users are requesting up to three long-term contracts from Reclamation to release 10,825 acre-feet of water per year to the 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River.

The Fish and Wildlife Service (**Service**) is a **cooperating agency**. Because the Service is responsible for endangered fish recovery, the Service can offer special expertise when preparing the Environmental Assessment.

East and west slope **Water Users** are requesting contracts from Reclamation and are the **project proponents**.



Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed 10825 contracts is to allow water providers that divert from the Colorado River or its tributaries to fulfill a commitment described in the *1999 Final Programmatic Biological Opinion [PBO] for Bureau of Reclamation's Operations and Depletions, Other Depletions, and Funding and Implementation of the Recovery Program Actions in the Upper Colorado River Above the Confluence with the Gunnison River*. Pursuant to the PBO, the water users will permanently deliver 10,825 acre-feet of water ("10825 water") to the 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River to augment baseflows in late-summer and early fall in support of the recovery of endangered fish species (Colorado pikeminnow, razorback sucker, humpback chub, and bonytail chub).



The 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River

Proposed Action Alternative

The Water Users have requested the following contracts with Reclamation, each with a term of up to 40 years:

- A contract for release of 5,412.5 acre-feet/year from Ruedi Reservoir, a Reclamation facility on the Fryingpan River
- An “if and when” contract for storage in and release from Green Mountain Reservoir, a Reclamation facility on the Blue River
- A municipal-recreation contract (or similar agreement) to protect 5,412.5 acre-feet/year during conveyance from Granby Reservoir, a Reclamation facility on the Colorado River, to the 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River

At Granby Reservoir, the source of the water would be historical irrigation water from the Redtop Valley Ditch, which currently irrigates 844 acres on the Miller-Hereford Ranch and E Diamond H Ranch. Water released from Granby Reservoir would sometimes be exchanged into Green Mountain Reservoir and released at a later time.



Granby Reservoir



Ruedi Reservoir



Green Mountain Reservoir

1999 Programmatic Biological Opinion

In 1999, the Fish and Wildlife Service issued a Programmatic Biological Opinion that addressed the effects on endangered fish species in the upper Colorado River from the following actions:

- The continuation of all of Reclamation's operations, including all existing and authorized depletions, in the upper Colorado River Basin above the confluence with the Gunnison River
- Reclamation's portion of 120,000 acre-feet/year of new depletions in the upper Colorado River Basin above the confluence with the Gunnison River
- Actions undertaken by the Service, Reclamation, and the Western Area Power Administration in the funding and carrying out of recovery actions for the Recovery Implementation Program for Endangered Fish Species in the upper Colorado River Basin that affect the Colorado River from Rifle, Colorado, to Lake Powell, Utah, including the 15-Mile Reach of the Colorado River
- The continuation of all non-Federal existing depletions in the upper Colorado River Basin above the confluence with the Gunnison River, and the non-Reclamation portion of 120,000 acre-feet/year of new depletions in the upper Colorado River Basin above the confluence with the Gunnison River

Water Users' Commitment in the Programmatic Biological Opinion

- Release 10,825 acre-feet of water annually for the benefit of endangered fish species habitat in the 15-Mile Reach of the Colorado River near Grand Junction by augmenting late summer and fall baseflows
- Commitment for 10,825 acre-feet/year is divided equally between east and west slope water providers
- The water users will determine the existing or new facilities from which the water will be released and execute any necessary agreements by June 30, 2010 to supply the 10825 water on a permanent basis

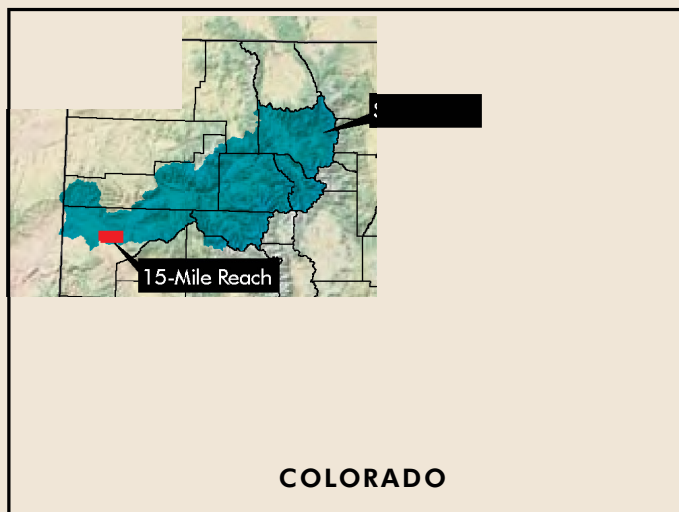


The 15-Mile Reach of the upper Colorado River

Importance of the 15-Mile Reach

(Colorado River from Gunnison River upstream for 15 miles)

- The 15-Mile Reach provides valuable spawning habitat for Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker
- The 15-Mile Reach provides an optimum balance between temperature and food availability for adult Colorado pikeminnow in the Colorado River
- The 15-Mile Reach provides an important refuge for endangered fishes should a catastrophic event cause a loss of populations in the Gunnison River or in the Colorado River below the Gunnison River confluence

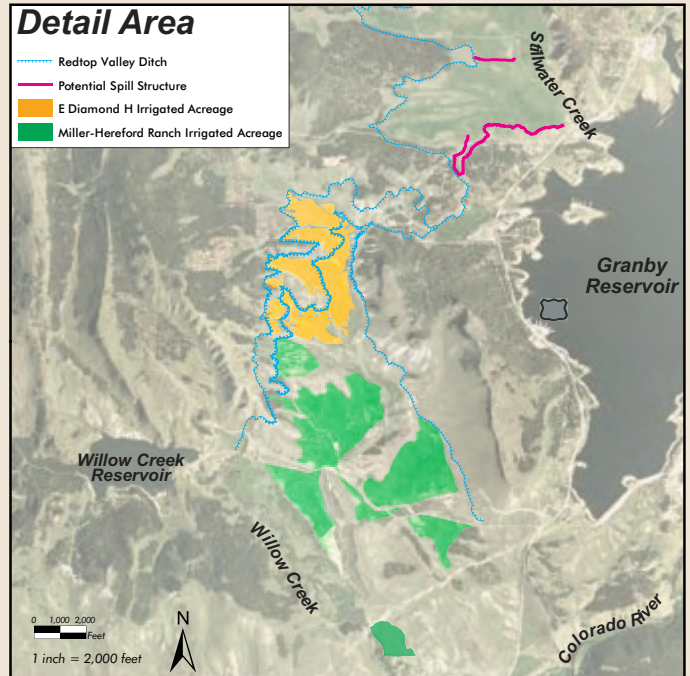
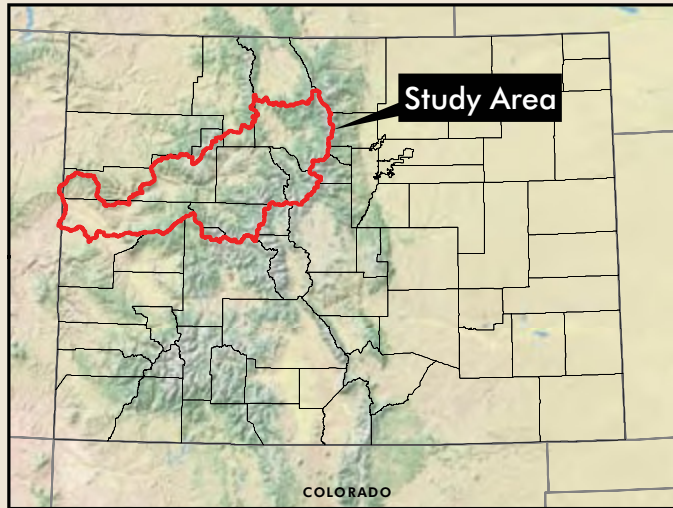


Razorback Sucker



Colorado Pikeminnow

General Study Area



Environmental Studies

Potentially affected resources will be evaluated and presented in the Environmental Assessment:

- Surface and Ground Water Hydrology and Quality
- Aquatic Resources
- Floodplains, Wetlands, and Riparian Areas
- Vegetation and Wildlife
- Soil, Geology, Paleontology, and Farmland
- Cultural Resources
- Recreation Resources
- Socioeconomics and Land Use



Fryingpan River



Blue River below Green Mountain Reservoir



Redtop Valley Ditch at Stillwater Creek